

REMARKS

Claim 1 is currently pending in the application. In an Office Action mailed December 18, 2001, Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112. Claim 1 was also rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102. Claim 1 has been amended above to clarify the invention and new Claims 2-58 have been added.

Before addressing the merits of the foregoing Office Action, applicants respectfully note an error in the submittal of substitute drawings on May 8, 2001. In that regard, it is noted that Figure 14 was inadvertently omitted from the submittal of substitute drawings. Applicants respectfully request entry of substitute Figure 14 into the present application. Please note that Figure 14 is fully supported by the application as originally filed both in the written description and the informal drawing submitted with the original filing and, therefore, no new matter is added by the present request.

In view of the above claim amendment and the remarks that follow, applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of all claims now pending in the application.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicants regard as the invention. In particular, the Office Action sets forth the position that it is unclear whether or not it is applicants' intent to positively recite the vehicle. As a result, the Office Action required clarification as to whether or not elements within the preamble are positively recited or functionally recited.

In response, applicants respectfully note that certain elements, such as "vehicle" and "wheelchair lift," are environmental only and are not intended to be positively recited within the

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claim. Accordingly, the Examiner's assumption that the claim is directed to only the subcombination of a door reciprocating assembly is correct.

In view of the foregoing comments, applicants respectfully submit that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, have been overcome.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,640,050, issued to Yamagishi *et al.* Applicants respectfully disagree. Before addressing the distinctions between the claims and the cited references of record, applicants briefly summarize certain embodiments of the present invention.

The present embodiment of amended Claim 1 is generally directed towards a reciprocating assembly for automatically reciprocating a sliding door between an open position and a closed position. The reciprocating assembly includes a latch assembly operable to latch and unlatch a door. The reciprocating assembly also includes a plug assembly operable to actuate the door between a plugged position and an unplugged position by rotating the door about a pivot axis. The reciprocating assembly further includes a drive assembly operable to reciprocate the door between the open position and the closed position. The reciprocating assembly also includes a sensor means for sensing whether the door is in the plugged or unplugged positions. None of the cited references of record teach or suggest such an assembly.

Yamagishi *et al.* is directed toward an automatic sliding door system for vehicle. Generally described, Yamagishi *et al.* addresses the need for providing an automatic sliding door system that may be operated from the driver's seat and outside the vehicle. In particular, "[t]he door must be slidably shifted outwardly *perpendicular* to the body 1 from the closing position X as shown by dotted lines in FIG. 1 when it is desired to open, and then the sliding door can be moved in parallel to the rearwards to the opening position Y." Column 3, lines 49-54.

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(emphasis added.) Thus, Yamagishi *et al.* expressly teach transitioning the door from a plugged to an unplugged position by displacing the door perpendicularly outward from the body of the vehicle.

Applicants respectfully note that Yamagishi *et al.* fail to teach or suggest an automatic door reciprocating system that includes a plug assembly operable to actuate a door between a plugged and an unplugged position by rotating the sliding door about a pivot axis. Yamagishi *et al.* also fail to teach or suggest sensor means for sensing whether the sliding door is in the plugged or unplugged position, as now generally set forth in amended Claim 1. Instead, Yamagishi *et al.* merely disclose a door that is shifted *perpendicularly* from the vehicle body. Note further that there is no teaching or suggestion within Yamagishi *et al.* of sensor means for sensing whether the door is in a plugged or unplugged position, as now set forth in amended Claim 1. Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that amended Claim 1 is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious by Yamagishi *et al.*

New Claims

Applicants respectfully request entry and consideration of new Claims 2-58.

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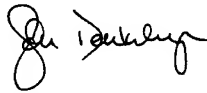
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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, applicants submit that the claims of the present application are allowable over the cited and applied references. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney with questions regarding this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

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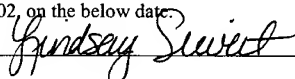


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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE JUNE 10, 2002

In the Specification:

The paragraph beginning at page 7, line 25, has been amended as follows:

Operation of the door drive assembly 20 may be best understood by referring to FIGURES 8-10. To clarify operation of the current embodiment of the present invention, a well known platform lift 152, such as that disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,158,419, issued to Kempf et al., the disclosure of which is hereby expressly incorporated by reference, is illustrated. The [ramp] platform lift 152 may be reciprocated between stowed and deployed positions, such that it may be selectively positioned adjacent the access door 22 to load and unload passengers from the lift 152.

In the Claims:

1. (Amended) An automatic door reciprocating system for use with a wheelchair lift designed to be stowed in a lower compartment of a vehicle, the vehicle having a floor and a sliding door, the sliding door being slidable between open and closed positions, the wheelchair lift having a platform which is movable between an upper position, where the platform is substantially coplanar with the floor, and a lower position, the automatic door reciprocating system comprising:

a reciprocating assembly for automatically reciprocating the sliding door between the open and closed positions[.], the reciprocating assembly comprising:

(a) a latch assembly operable to latch and unlatch a sliding door;

(b) a plug assembly operable to actuate the sliding door between a plugged position and an unplugged position by rotating the sliding door about a pivot axis;

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(c) a drive assembly operable to reciprocate the sliding door between the open position and the closed position; and

(d) a sensor means for sensing whether the sliding door is in the plugged or unplugged positions.

New Claims 2-58 have been added.

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